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SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY

Letter dated 23 November 1992 from the Director-General of the International Labour Organisation addressed to the Secretary-General

The proposal currently under consideration by the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session to convene in 1995 a world summit for social development has given rise to very keen interest within the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

At its recently held 254th meeting, the Governing Body of the International Labour Office conducted a very extensive debate on the question. During the debate, the representatives of the numerous Governments as well as the employers' and workers' groups that make up the Governing Body strongly emphasized their wish that ILO, which has an eminently social mandate, should play a central role in the preparation, holding and follow-up of the summit and instructed me to inform you in this regard as speedily as possible. The decision adopted by the Governing Body reads as follows:

> "The Governing Body instructs the Director-General to invite the Secretary-General of the United Nations to bring to the attention of the General Assembly, at its forty-seventh session, that the tripartite constituents of the International Labour Organisation consider that this organization, given its specific mandate in the social field, should be called upon to play a central role in the preparation, the holding and the follow-up of the world summit for social development."

I should therefore be grateful if you would bring this decision by the Governing Body of the International Labour Office to the attention of the General Assembly at its present session.

Furthermore, although this is not explicitly stated in its formal decision, the Governing Body also instructed me to impress upon you the need to ensure that the world summit for social development is not held in June 1995. As you know, the International Labour Conference meets every year in June and, in the view of the Governing Body, it would be extremely detrimental to the central role that it wishes ILO to play at the summit, if the two events took place simultaneously. In this connection, I should point out to you that the members of the Governing Body regretted very deeply that the decision had been taken to hold the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in June 1993 - namely, at the same time as the session of the International Labour Conference - in spite of the very great interest on the part of ILO in the questions to be discussed at the World Conference, and they very firmly hoped that such overlapping would not recur during the world summit.

In addition to these formal decisions, I should like to mention other points that were raised during the discussion that just took place in the Governing Body.

The members of the Governing Body stressed the need to involve as closely as possible the employers' and workers' organizations in the preparation of the summit as well as the summit itself. The tripartite dialogue, which enables the social actors to participate with Governments in decision-making in the field of social policy, is, as you know, a basic principle of ILO, and the experience of our organization in its 73 years of existence has fully demonstrated that such a dialogue is essential to social progress. While ILO, for its part, will certainly involve its tripartite representatives in the preparation of its contribution to and its participation at the world summit, I should like to hope that the employers' and workers' organizations will be invited to contribute to the preparatory work for the summit as well as to the summit itself.

During these discussions in the Governing Body, concern was also expressed that the agenda of the world summit should focus on a very limited number of issues to enable the summit to achieve concrete results. In this regard, I am happy to note that Ambassador Somavia, in his report, has suggested that reduction of poverty, generation of productive employment and strengthening of social cohesion should be the priority themes of the summit. These themes appear to me to be thoroughly appropriate since they relate to the most acute social problems confronting all countries today.

I hope that through this letter I have conveyed all the importance that our organization attaches to the world summit and have expressed our desire to contribute effectively to its sucess. I take this opportunity to inform you that I have designated an experienced official of the International Labour Office, Mr. J. P. Martin, who is currently Coordinator of Interdepartmental

Projects and Activities, to coordinate the contribution by ILO to this important event. It would doubtless be advisable for Mr. Martin to contact at an early date Mr. Somavia or other officials to be designated by you in order to consider in detail the form and substance of our cooperation with the United Nations for the summit.

(Signed) Michel HANSENNE